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DECORATION & FURNITURE

HARMONIES IN COLOR.



It is from the agreeable use of contrasts that harmonies in color result. To determine whether the results of contrasts are agreeable or otherwise is the important question in decoration, color being here of more consequence than form.

If the decorative artist has an instinct for color he will need but little else to help him to a decision. This happy instinct, however, is possessed by only a few. But there are other methods of arriving at the same end, and certain fundamental rules, the results of modern scientific researches, cannot fail to prove of great assistance to the decorative artist.

For him the solar spectrum is not composed of seven or three primitive colors, but of a number of tints, each of which affords numerous and rich combinations of color. It is not enough to say that yellow and blue, and red and green are complementary colors. In the mind of the artist blue represents ultramarine, and green a bluish green, with which the color green is only partly associated. There are certain primitive regions in which red and green and yellow and blue are said to go well together, and they mingle in millinery and other matters of the toilet with the best of intentions. Any doubt thrown on the results would at once be met with the philosophical answer that they are complementary colors. Without saying anything as to whether complementary colors furnish the best contrasts, it will be seen that the reason itself is false, unless the general terms, red, green, blue, yellow, should indicate special tints. A certain perspicuousness is necessary with those who work in color. Although in using color an amateur might feel

that the contrasts are not perfect, and endeavor to mend the one element or the other, the tampering with the tint itself is in itself a fault, because the purity of the color is one of the requirements of a good contrast, and meddling is most likely to render it muddy.

That which lies at the bottom of our pleasure in color harmonies is the fact that the association increases the value of each color. Judiciously placed, even poor colors may be made to glow with unusual beauty. Professor Rood, in "Modern Chromatics," says that "the changes in color and saturation become particularly conspicuous after somewhat prolonged observation, and are often attended with a peculiar soft glimmering which seems to float over the surfaces, and in the cases of colors that are far apart in the chromatic circle to lend them a lustrous appearance." Colors that are more or less pale or dark are in this way readily modified.

The first effect of contrast is to remove colors farther apart. Thus if orange and yellow are contrasted, the orange will assume a redder appearance, and the yellow a greenish tint. If red and yellow are associa-

ted, the red will appear purplish, the yellow greenish. As the colors are removed from one another in the chromatic circle, the change grows less, until the complementary colors, which are exactly opposite, undergo no change of tint, but each appears more intense.

The value of contrasts, however, neither depends on the amount of change produced nor on the brilliancy of the colors used. On the contrary, colors of a low degree of fulness exhibit the phenomena of contrast more vividly than bright colors; and while pale tints produce the strongest contrasts, the richest harmonies are the results of warm low tones. It will not be attempted here to enter into the reasons why certain colors are more agreeable when contrasted than others, but simply to give the best combinations as the result of the scientific experiments in color made by Rood and others.

It would be very desirable if amateurs studying decoration would provide themselves with a contrast diagram to which doubtful combinations could be referred. For example, colors less than eighty degrees or ninety

combinations with carmine improve by darkening both hues. Emerald green gives strong hard contrasts; with yellow both should be darkened. Sea green makes good contrasts with vermilion, red lead, and violet, but bad with carmine, blue, and yellow. Greenish blue combines well with Naples yellow, straw yellow, and with carmine in light tones, but only moderately well with chrome yellow, and badly with the violets.

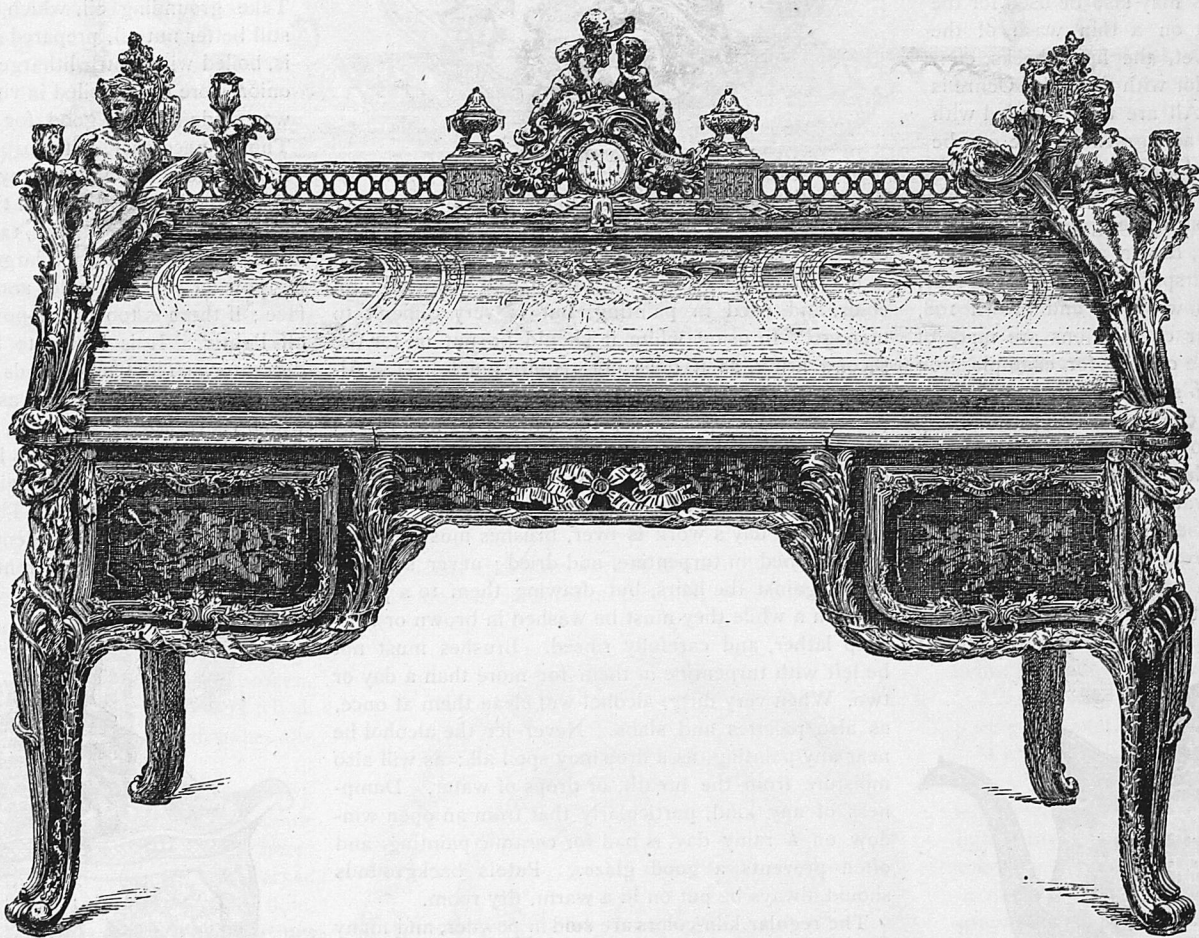
A red between carmine and vermilion, called spectral red, makes its best contrast with blue, but is strong and hard with green. Red and yellow combine better if both colors are darkened, or when the red inclines to purple and the yellow to green. Red and green also combine better if both colors are dark, and with olive green the contrast is admirable. Vermilion and gold are excellent together, and if the yellow is darkened to olive the contrast is desirable, as also with green if both colors are darkened. Red lead contrasts well with blue and with greenish blue. With orange and yellow the combination is good, but the yellow must not be

too bright. With blue green both colors are improved by darkening. Orange contrasts well with greenish blue, ultramarine, green, and moderately well with violet. Orange yellow contrasts at its best with ultramarine, well with violet and purple, tolerably with greenish blue, and badly with purple red and sea green. Yellow makes its best harmonies with violet, but contrasts well with purple red and purple. Blue-green and yellow is a very bad combination unless both colors are very dark, and darkening improves its relations with green. Chrome yellow and emerald green should also be darkened. Greenish yellow is also at its best with violet, but gives good combinations with purple and purplish red, and strong though hard contrasts with vermilion, the red between carmine and vermilion

and red lead. Its harmonies with orange yellow and greenish blue are improved by darkening the latter colors.

In every good contrast one warm color is necessary, the term including yellow and purple and all the tints lying between them. In beginning to work with color Professor Rood advises using the combinations of dull yellow, brown, gray, and blue-gray first, as they are easier, afterward approaching the more positive colors. In adding a third note to the color chord it is found that colors equidistant from one another, or one hundred and twenty degrees apart in the chromatic circle, make good harmonies. And in proof it is observed that the groups of colors that have been most in use follow more or less closely this principle. These are purple red, yellow, and green-blue; orange, green, and violet; spectral red or carmine washed with vermilion, yellow, and blue; orange, green, and purple violet.

A second principle to be added is that two out of the three colors should be warm. One of the favorite triads of the Italian school is vermilion, green, and violet-blue, but the green being olive, or dark greenish



BUREAU IN LOUIS QUINZE STYLE. BY DASSON.

degrees apart suffer when brought in contrast; and it will be found that the best combinations are always more than ninety degrees apart. Thus, red contrasts well with blue and greenish blue, but is less happily combined with ultramarine, and still less so with violet.

Complementary colors as a rule are harsh from excessive contrast. The best contrasts made by complementary colors are ultramarine and yellow, greenish blue and orange, and violet and greenish yellow. But in using dark, dull, or pale colors, the complementary colors give a brilliant effect, and the nearer colors approach to black, brown or gray, the more freely complementaries can be used.

Green and violet are the most difficult colors to contrast successfully. Green is not only cold but very intense, and the slightest difference in the tint demands wide difference in the complementary colors. One way of obviating the difficulties with green is to use it in small quantities. The best combination of grass green is with violet, and Chevreul advises using pale hues of each. Grass green combines better with blue when the green inclines to yellow, and the blue to violet. Its

yellow, it amounts practically to a warm color. In these groups of three the composition can be varied by making use of small intervals, and adding other colors in small quantities. White and gray can also be happily added to the combinations orange, green, and violet; purple-red, yellow, and green-blue. The student, by the use of the chromatic circle, can work out other color harmonies not spoken of here, which will lead the way to larger color groups, and such attempts Professor Rood specially advises.

One of the important results of contrast is the production of new tints by placing small quantities of pure color on a different ground, and the two colors blending on the retina produce the desired hue. In the decoration of the Alhambra this is a favorite method of producing new colors. Blue and gold at a distance yield a violet hue, red and gold a soft orange, blue white and red a light violet. Coming home, it will be remembered that Mr. Tiffany gets a violet tone, for the Union League Club house by stencilling small figures of blue on a red ground. Such effects are very common now in dress goods, and particularly in gingham, in which various tints of blue are made by combination with more or less threads of white.

MARY GAY HUMPHREYS.

A LOUIS QUINZE BUREAU.

THE elaborate bureau in the Louis Quinze style, of which we give two illustrations, was exhibited at the Paris Exposition of 1878 by M. Dasson, who copied it from the original preserved in the Louvre. The scrupulous conservator of that museum gave Dasson leave to copy the bureau, but would not allow him to take an impression of any of the ornamental work, and only once was the cylinder cover opened before him. Even then he was not suffered to touch the drawers. But Dasson conjectured what he could not see, set his wits and his artisans to work, and produced a copy so perfect that even experts could scarcely distinguish it from the original bronze and marquetry work of Caffieri and Riesener. Lady Ashburton became the purchaser of this remarkable reproduction of what has been styled "the most beautiful piece of furniture in the world."

CONCERNING MONOGRAMS.

SCARCELY anything seems so easy as to design a monogram, yet we see very few successful ones, the most of them being a mass of mixed-up letters and ornament of which we can find neither the beginning nor the end. There is a law regulating the designing of everything, and it is this law which the true designer keeps in mind and applies to his work; the effects of obedience to this law and its violation are seen as clearly in the design for a monogram as in the design for a cathedral.

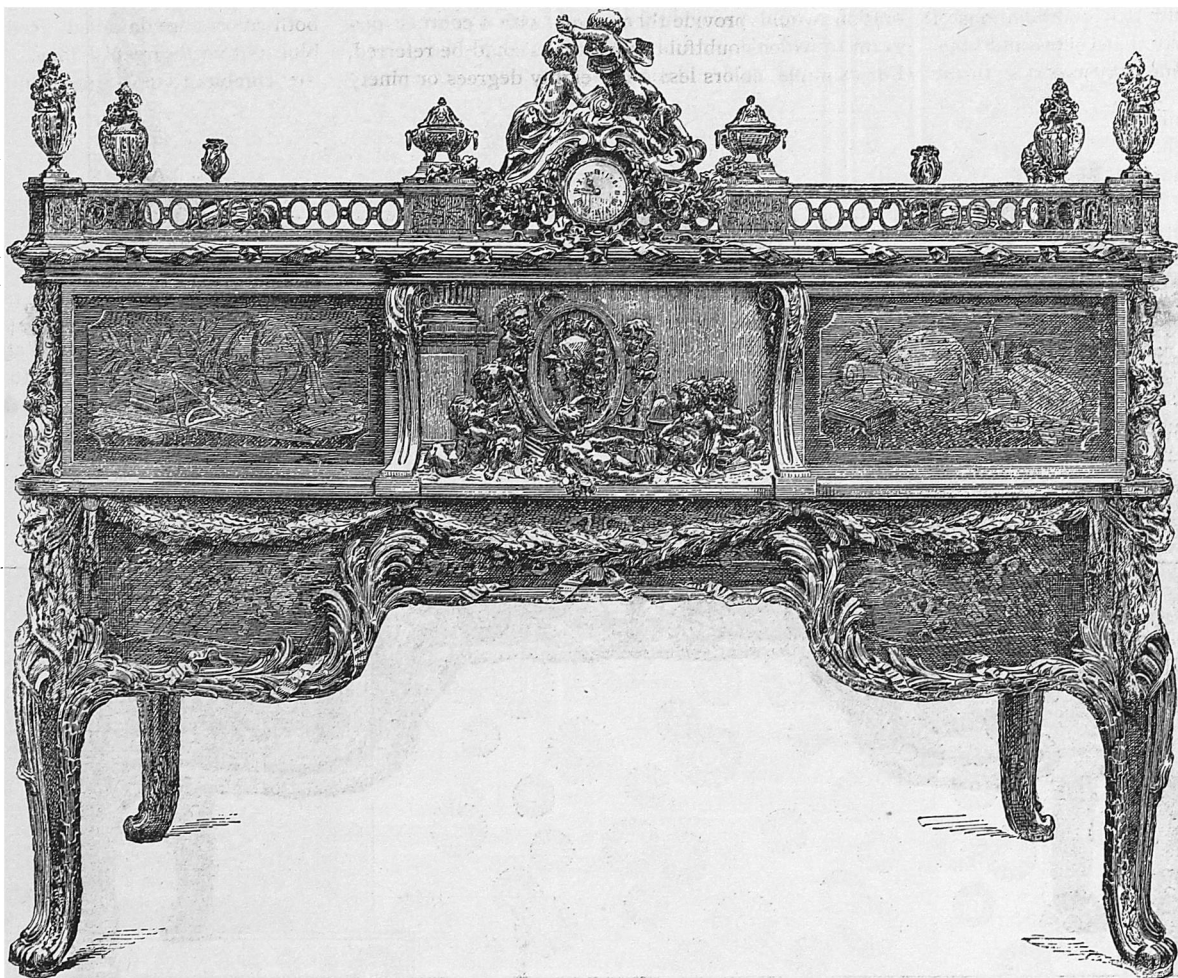
First, there should be harmony of composition—that is, the letters should so emphasize, subdue, or control each other that the composition should impress us as compact, appropriate, and, being so, beautiful.

Second, there should be no unnecessary ornamentation; there should be a quiet and peace about the design which will always please the truly artistic. Looking at some designs, we get the impression that ornament was

so plentiful that the designer saw no other means of consumption than that of burying his design in it, for we see that there is a mass of curves, angles, shades, and leaves, but nothing else.

Third, simplicity of lettering is an important requisite, as there should be no possibility of mistaking an E for a G or C, and the boundaries or outlines of the letters should be well defined.

Fourth, the order of sequence of the letters should be carefully attended to. The common idea is, that a certain number of letters are given with which to make a pleasing design, and so far that impression is right; but there is something beyond this. There is the art of so placing the letters that one can distinguish at a glance the first, the central, and the last letter. Now the rule to be observed to secure this result is as follows: the *last* letter of the monogram must be the principal feature, and must be the largest, the boldest, and the heaviest letter; then the *first* letter must be the next in size, but the lightest in outline and color; then the *central* letter must be the smallest and of an intermediate tint. If the monogram is of four letters the two intermediate must be the same size and the second letter lighter in outline and color than the third.



BUREAU IN LOUIS QUINZE STYLE. BY DASSON. (REAR VIEW.)

A few words may be said about the coloring of monograms. The first letter should be bright, light, and clear; the second of a solid and firm color; the third similar but darker, and the last of a heavy, decided tone. For example, color the monogram G. B. D. in the following manner: G bright, clear vermilion; B of a tint between Prussian and French blue or ultramarine, and D of a good, warm chocolate. There are many variations, but these remarks will, perhaps, point out the way to the earnest student.

IS "GRAINING" DEFENSIBLE?

OUR readers know that we are opposed to "graining" in imitation of wood, by house-painters and decorators. Shams of all kinds are to be condemned, and as graining, however little it may succeed in its aim, is intended to deceive, it is a sham, and in our opinion should therefore be avoided by persons of taste. Whatever thinkers on art, however, may say on the subject, does not seem to affect its popularity among the masses. At least not in England, for we read that "The Painters' and Grainers' Handbook," published in London, has reached a twenty-eighth edition. The

editor defends the practice of "graining" in the following ingenious manner:

"It has long been predicted by a certain class of art critics that the imitation of woods and marbles cannot be continued as a fashion for any lengthened period, inasmuch as it is, after all, only a sham and a make-believe. But our daily life is, from beginning to end, made up of shams. It is not everybody who can luxuriate in the magnificence of a palace; nor can every one clothe himself in purple and fine linen. Dives, blest with riches, may indulge in costly grandeur, but surely Lazarus may, within his poor means, affect the same grandeur; and if the one feels as much delight in the aluminium as the other does in the pure gold, it would be most unphilosophic to curtail his pleasure and tell him that he should not indulge in the equally gorgeous, but intrinsically worthless, article."

We do not presume to speak for those who revel in the delights of pinchbeck jewelry. If the editor of the "Handbook" appeals to the taste of that class, of course he has a large audience, and he knows them better than we do.

A NURSERY mantel lambrequin tells the story of Cinderella. The different scenes are worked in brown

outline stitch on oblong pieces of old-gold satine. These are set between narrow strips of dark red velvet several inches longer than the oblongs, and are finished with a point, and a dark red silk tassel swung in a flat gilt ring. Smaller strips of the red velvet border the lower edge of the oblong, connecting with the longer strips, and a corresponding piece extends above the length of the mantel. These are all ornamented with pyramids of feather-stitch in shades of écreu.

UNIQUE work-bags were seen at many of the summer resorts. Long scarfs of silk or pongee were made double. Toward the bottom a slit was left, in which was inserted a pocket of some pretty contrasting silk. The ends of the scarf had been first embroidered in silks. If the material was pongee, the design was generally

suggestive figures done in outline stitch. In other colors and materials the ornament was flowers and foliage. The scarf was then doubled, passed through an ivory or gold ring, and carried swinging over the arm.

FABRICS for upholstery displayed this season have never been exceeded in richness. Arnold, Constable & Co. have recently opened a number of pieces of French tapestries that are equally remarkable for their magnificent textures and for their artistic designs. As may be imagined, their motives are taken from the old Flemish and French hand-wrought tapestries, and they imitate the stitches, as well as reproduce the designs and colors with great skill. Those worsted-faced have the entire ground covered; others, on silk ground, more closely resemble antique embroideries. These grounds are for the most part dark red and Indian blue. Two Indian designs are repeated on these colors, consisting of large palms and sharp pointed flowers, birds, and foliage in antique tints, but with the ground color in each prevailing. These designs are largely mingled with gold, and each form is outlined with gold. Another has all the flowers of a Persian flora, scarcely showing the ground, and thickly interspersed and outlined with gold. A third design is a Renaissance pattern, a series of bold scrolls and large flower forms, leaving large spaces of the ground free, and wrought in higher colors. Still another design, on a creamy satin ground, resembles a magnificent piece of Italian embroidery.